

POLITIEA
ACTA TERTIUM
Mathew

CHAPTER 1

It was so cold. The sky had turned a dank, grayish color; when you looked up, you couldn't tell where the skyline ended and the clouds began. I trudged through the streets, slowly, steadily, as if propelled only by grim determination. Distantly I could see the lights at the base of Politeia Tower. They had already lit the first five torches, three on the left, and two on the right, and tonight they would light the last small torch, symbolizing the selection of this years golds from amongst the seven year olds. Tomorrow, on the last night of the Festival of the Foundation of Politeia, the coldest, deadest night of winter, the Supreme Vicar would ignite the large central torch, and all seven would blaze in the midst of Politeia, symbolizing the light that the Doctrine shines in the darkness of the human world.

I finally arrived and stood at the back of the crowd before the podium. A sub-Prelate was making an opening speech. As he spoke, I examined his words carefully: "In trying times, such as these, we must remember that we have only one rock to cling to in this tempest sea of life -- the Doctrine." A relatively neutral statement, that. "If we loosen our grip on this rock of salvation, we will certainly be thrown back into the chaos of the sea." An obvious boon for the Reactionaries, but was he sincere? "While we clutch this rock of Salvation, we must always look for deeper, more secure ways to keep to the Doctrine, never become sedentary" A smile crept up my jaw. Everyday I come to see which faction holds sway over the Supreme Vicariate, everyday I get more ambiguous answers.

Commandant Pericles had been serious when he made his promises about reforming the Doctrine and Institutions. He made many more pronouncements about what we needed to do to save Politia. And many listened. He something was seriously wrong with our system that we had strayed from the original spirit of the Doctrine. No one stopped him. What was once unthinkable was now commonplace. So many were already thinking what he was saying, that it went on with astonishing lack of official reaction.

Soon this began to cause alarm in some quarters. In the beginning they just made cautious statements insisting that, while Pericles was a brave leader, who inspired us in times of crisis, he was going too far in telling the civilian government what to do. When these arguments fell on deaf ears their indignation became more assertive and began to accuse Pericles, and the "reformists" generally, of being a threat to the civilian government, and even the Doctrine itself. Pericles' admirers responded that his detractors were short sighted and afraid of change; they labeled their critics "reactionaries". And so, as the months cooled, the rift between the two groups steadily grew sharper, until, at mid-winter, there were two Politias, that of the Reformists and that of the Reactionaries.

While the partisans certainly believed their ideals, allegiance to one faction or the other often overlapped with personal connections and earlier inter-Agency relationships. For instance, some of the earliest supporters of the Reformist faction, outside the PIMF, were in the ECES. The golds who administered the ECES had always been in regular contact with the officers in the PIMF, whom they worked with to supply weapons, armor,

and other military necessities. There had already been networks of connections among these Institutions that people didn't want compromised, in addition to being naturally more disposed to the ideas of their long-time acquaintances. Much the same dynamic occurred amongst the bronzes in the ECES, who had close working relationships with the silver enlisted men, and were likewise receptive to Commandant Pericles' message.

The Reactionaries' stronghold was the General-Secretariat of Education. The fundamental prerequisite of a Guardian of the Children was absolute faith in the validity of the Doctrine and the Institutions, as it was their duty, after all, to instill faith in the Doctrine in all the future citizens of Politeia. Not surprisingly the leader of the Reactionary faction was Chair-Lady Herata, the former Secretary-General of Education.

Other Agencies were mixed, the Medical Directorate, for instance. The Medical Director himself, Hippocrates, was a firm Reformist as was his general-staff. But subordinate Agencies within the Directorate, notably the Bureau for the Propagation of the Species, headed by Commissioner Herodotus, was within the Reactionary orbit; probably because of the close relation the BPS had with the Educational Agencies. Their principle duty was to oversee newborn Future Citizens before they were transferred to the Educational Secretariat.

As these thoughts went through my head I saw the Supreme Vicar finally get up to speak at the podium. The Vicar was old, and many thought he was senile, but he still held great respect among the Politeian people, and the devoted loyalty of the Expounderhood; I never said so, but, I more than suspected that he was but a figurehead. The Vicar spoke. "What Legaus Donatius would want us to do in a time like this, is to seek unity, not division" I couldn't help thinking of the statue in the Garden. "If our experiment were to fall apart, over some trivial disagreement, it would destroy all that our forefathers have spent 6000 years trying to build" I couldn't help thinking of larges in Politeian history I discovered in the Cathedral library. "We should remember, above all we are Politeians, not golds, silvers, PIMF-men or other things" Nice words. Good sentiment too. But empty. It was obvious the Vicariate was trying to placate both sides. This puzzled me. Given the Vicars moral authority, and control over the Expounderhood, he could easily tip the balance either way he wanted. One could only guess what the Vicar, and other forces within the Expounderhood were up to.

"Now, Fellow-Citizens, join me, please, in pledging our sacred oath of loyalty to the ideals of Legaus Donatius, and the dream for which our forefathers worked so hard, the dream of Politeia," the Supreme Vicar raised his right arm, giving the Politeian salute, and his audience did likewise, then he continued reverently:

"May our hearts be guided by the Doctrine"

"May our hearts be guided by the Doctrine"

"May our actions be ruled by the Institutions"

“May our actions be ruled by the Institutions”

“May our lives be dedicated to Politeia, the embodiment of the Doctrine, through the Institutions.”

“May our lives be dedicated to Politeia, the embodiment of the Doctrine, through the Institutions.”

“And, now, my Fellow-Citizens, I wish you all a safe journey back to your Residential Facilities, and may the spirit of the Festival of the Foundation be with you in these dark times. “

“And with you.”

Slowly the crowd that had gathered around the torches began to crumble away into the darkened ally ways of central Politeia. Some went to carriages which RFAs had arranged for to escort their charges out to distant RFs. I had to walk. RF4 was too close by to arrange a carriage. Actually I quite enjoyed the walk; a chance to take a stroll through the abandoned, dark streets, the crisp winter air, all so different that what it's like in the daytime.

No such luck.

“Are you Klinias S-112263?”

“Yes. Who, by the Doctrine, are you?”

“Could you please identify?”

“You know that who protocol is meaningless, what if I lied?”

“I need you to identify, sir,” Reluctantly I raised my arm in the salute and...

“I am Klinias S-112263. Identify.”

“E-leven... twenty two, six *three*. That is correct?”

“What do you want?”

“I'm from the Bureau for the Propagation of the Species.”

“And why, exactly, would the BPS want with a me, or any male for that matter? It's Birthing Season. Isn't it your job to know these thing?”

“Frankly, sir, I have no idea, but I have to escort a Klinias S-112263 to the Bureau headquarters immediately. I've been standing here in the freezing cold for an hour waiting for the ceremony to end so I could...”

“So you could interrupt my evening unannounced?”

“Uhhh,” he sighed “I have the carriage parked over by the Agriculture Chamber. Just follow me, please.”

“Thank you for coming at such short notice, Klinias, may I offer you a drink?” Dr. Nativius was as cordial and causal as possible.

“No, I'll be fine. What was it you wanted to talk with me about?” Dr. Nativius didn't answer, but poured some coffee into his cup and sat down comfortably on his chair. I sat on a sofa facing him.

“Just a formality, there is some business concerning your last visit here that we need to inform you about.”

“Inform me,” Nativius took a sip of his drink and paused for a moment before he began what he had to say.

“You remember what I said about eugenics not being an exact science, that precautions have to be taken to get the right combination of genes, and sometimes, occasionally, errors are made which complicate the process...”

“Meaning...”

“Well, meaning that sometimes we don’t put the right male, with the right female, and we don’t get the desired effect. One human mistake creates a whole genetic line of improperly bred Citizens, you understand?”

“You’re saying you didn’t match me up with the correct female?”

“Yes, but I’m afraid the error is much graver than just that. Even when those clerical oversights are made, we usually let everything go as plan, and see what happens in schooling, often the results from the malfunction are as good or better that we had originally intended. But in your case, that might not be an option.”

“Why?”

“The female that you did end up impregnating, and this has only occurred a couple of times in our history, was your female co-progeny, what, in pre-Foundational times, might be called your sister.” My mind went blank.

“My female co-progeny. Not even supposed to know about our co-progeny or progenitors, that’s one of the fundamental laws of Politeia, so there’s no ...I have a sister!?”

“You have a *female co-progeny*. And you shouldn’t think of her any differently than you would any other Citizen. Unfortunately, and yours is a very rare case, this female is your co-progeny on both maternal and paternal lines. So to avoid the birth of a potentially unviable offspring, and to prevent an inbred strain from entering into the genetic pool of Politeia, Commissioner Herodotus has decided in consultation with the other doctors, that the future Citizen should be terminated upon birth. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this oversight may have caused you.”

“Inconvenience? Inconvenience!” I stood up over the good doctor. “First you tell me I have a female co-pr...a sister, a full sister that I’ve never even met, then you tell me I have a child with her, and now you’re going to kill it, him, as soon as he’s born. And you’re sorry if this causes me inconvenience! What kind of a sick excuse for a human being are you!”

“I anticipated a reaction like this.” Dr. Nativius put his coffee back on the table and stood up to face me. “One of the principle reasons why people aren’t allowed to know who their co-progeny, progenitors and such are is that they have a tendency to become attached to these certain people, to look out for them so to speak, and in so doing forget that their first loyalty is to the good of the community as a whole. And it is in the interest of Politeia that we do this, because we cannot allow a bastardized strain into the Politeian gene pool. Don’t be so selfish.”

“Selfish! *Selfish!* I have given my entire *life* to Politeia, devoted every second of my 36 years to the good of my fellow-Citizens, and this is how Politeia repays me? Having me inbreed with my sister, and then killing the offspring?!”

“Politeia gives everything to you, so you must give every thing to it. Its not always easy making sacrifices for the Doctrine, Klinias, but it is the hard sacrifices we make, like the one you are about to give, that are the fullest testament of our devotion to the common good. Anyway, the functionary who gave you the wrong papers has been flogged, so somebody has been punished.”

I had cool off a little by now. “There is nothing that can be done?”

“The female in question is well within her ninth month, the future Citizen is due any day now, and our decision was made months ago.” He took a sip of his coffee.

“There is nothing to be done.”

Nativius was right. Once the BPS had made up its mind, I was powerless to stop it. What could a lowly civil servant do against all that state machinery poised to kill his child the moment it was born?

CHAPTER 2

Once I arrived back at the RF, I slowly started going through the usual motions, preparing for sleep hour. I didn't say anything, I could hardly think. There can be no comfort or relaxation after learning what I just learned. I made my way through the empty Cafetarium, pass the wool curtain, into the black Dormatorium where the rest of the RF was asleep, and it dawned on me; it dawned on me that I was inside a lie. Not only the Institutions and the Doctrine and all, but... the building I was in, the roof over my head, the floor I was standing on -- Politeia, the city created for the greatest happiness of the greatest number, mankind's highest achievement, was a lie; and, for the first time, I realized it was dangerous.

Surprisingly, despite my anxiety, I fell fast asleep that night. In fact, almost as soon as I had enveloped myself in the thick layers of bedding I settled down into a dream. I was in a white room. A nice warm room. It was bright, as if the sun were out, but I was definitely indoors. It was familiar; I was sure that I had been in this very room before, though I didn't know when. BANG! A horrifying shape suddenly invaded the room. Four, no, five others had rushed in with it. It convulsed one side to the other, screaming and sobbing. "Aiiieeeee!" Six arms try to restrain her, some her legs, and others her chest. Does only some much good. "Aiiieeeee!" Something's happening now, now, "Uhh, huu, uhh, uhh," she's breathing heavily "Aiiieeeee!" Now I think its coming. By the Doctrine! There is so much blood everywhere and so much...I don't know what, why is this happening?

"WaaaaWaaaaaa," another horrifying sound, the most horrifying sound a man can hear. But it isn't her. "WaaaaWaaaaaa" Its something attached to her...a little pink ball coming out her, with a long red tube attached. "WaaaaWaaaaaa". It's a... it's a, it's a child. They cut it off from her...stopped crying...not so pink anymore...in a nice blue blanket...its eyes are so brown, features, so handsome. By the Doctrine, what's happening? What's happening!? What is that doctor doing!? You're not supposed to turn it like that! Its hurting, crying, stop! NO!

Black... everything black. Cold too, like midnight in winter. Feel around. I'm still here, alone now. Touch the instruments, cold as ice, like everything here. By the Doctrine, this feels like flesh! Cold flesh, but still...this must have been her, the shape that the doctors were hovering over. The mother. I want to see the face. Where is the face of the mother of the child?

Felt up were the head is ... covered; rip off the veil, still more covers, like layers of bandages. Frantically I start pulling, ripping them off, scared to death I'll never see her face. Last one-- the face! I saw the face and all my anticipation evaporates. Walk backwards to the wall, slowly. Looked at the face, trying to see something different, but I can't. It was what I saw. The face was mine.

The RF commissary was officially closed during Sleep Hours, yet one could always find at least one or two Citizens back there looking for a midnight snack. That night I was one of them. I went straight to cold storage and got something to drink, anything; emptied a whole bottle of the first thing I could find in a few swigs. Needed to calm my nerves. What the hell had just happened?

“*Yawn*, well hello, Klinias, I see your up,” Megilus was sitting at a non-descript counter, eating. “I get a little insomniac during the holidays too. There just nothing to make you tired, after awhile you just...”

“There going to kill him tomorrow.”

“Huh?”

“My son, Megilus, they are going to kill him as soon as he is born. What makes it even worse is that he’s also my nephew.”

“Are you alright?”

“Megilus, they brought me to the BPS building today. They told me that, the child I conceived last birthing season, was accidentally, they, I...oh,(gulp)” Megilus put his hand on my shoulder.

“Calm down, calm down...alright, from the beginning, tell me what’s going on.” I took a breath and started to explain.

“The BPS accidentally mated me with my female co-progeny last mating season. So they’re going to kill the offspring as soon as it is born.”

“Who told you this?”

“The BPS themselves, Dr. Nativius the guy who supervised my...” I searched for the right word, “Fertilization.”

“Hhhmmm, I see” Megilus took gave an inquisitive look. “You know, the Medical Directorate is allied with the military, perhaps I can talk to my CO and...”

“Thanks, but its no good. The operation will take place any day now, and the BPS is loyal to Chairlady Herata anyway.”

Megilus put his hand to his mouth and started pacing around the commissary. It was his in nature to explore all possible options before resigning himself to fate. “BPS is set on it, only told you today, because they knew it would be too late, could appeal to the Medical Director, but that’s already a sensitive issue with the BPS, and he wouldn’t want to antagonize them. Might also be a reprimand for you since it means having a group loyalty...”

“That’s another thing; you realize we shouldn’t even be having this conversation. It’s our duty to put the welfare of Politeia ahead of sub-national relationships like this.”

“Nine months ago, I would have agreed with you completely. But ever since the war, all the old dogmas about the Doctrine, the Institutions... just all starting to sound hollow. I mean everyone gives them lip service, use the Book of Nomoi to justify what ever they want. Invoked the Doctrine for what ever they like, even if it’s contradictory. Besides, if Politeian rule is so great, why do we have these problems in the first place? You know, “he lowered his voice, “if you want, we could secure this objective extra-legally and a *lot* of people wouldn’t think evil of it.”

“Megilus, there’s something I have to tell you. I’ve been losing my faith in the Doctrine for a long time now, but probably the final straw. Look, I haven’t told anyone about this, but when I was at the Cathedral for the Study of the Doctrine...”

“Stop right there,” Icarus appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. “Plotting treason in the commissary at night? And they say a RFAs job is uninteresting.” My heart sank, but was also relieved. “And what faction, pray tell, were you going install in power after your little coup? I heard someone mention the ISD, is the Expounderhood trying to re-assert power?”

“Icarus, I swear, we weren’t planning on any kind of subversion...” Megilus started.

“In these days, I’m not surprised that people are trying to pre-empt each other by seizing power...”

“Icarus...”

“But whatever my personal sympathies, it is my duty to the constitution of Politiea to turn you in. I only hope...”

“Icarus...”

“...by my actions, I may, in some small way, still the social disharmony that has troubled our fair homeland and...

“Icarus...”

“...with peace and justice for all” Megilus, careful not to actually strike him, took Icarus and hung him be his cloak onto a nearby hook, disturbing some dirty kitchen utensils.

“We’re not going to put anyone in power, but we might kidnap Klinias female co-progeny so the BPS won’t kill her baby.”

Icarus peeked out from under the copper pot that had fallen over his head “Sounds interesting, perhaps I can help?”

CHAPTER 3

It was quiet and dark the next evening. All of metropolitan Politeia was gathered at the center of the city, awaiting the Foundation ceremony. Light from the huge torches flooded Politeia Square, but left the rest of the city in darkness. Beyond the torches warm glow there was nothing but black, lonely concrete, which nobody seemed to remember. Sometimes I wondered if the rest of the city even existed at all when it was so forgotten. But that night, at least, the outer city did exist, for three small figures, dressed in black robes and masks, stole through the streets and bridges from building to building, block to block, as quiet and comprehended as the city itself.

Politeia was a large place, and you didn't realize just how large it is until you try to traverse it on foot. It was almost two hours before we got to the Medical Directorate; then we had to find the BPS. Under my hood, I smiled a bit at our situation: we had each been born at the BPS and, no doubt, each of us has been summoned to there at least once, but none of us knew the actual location where new life came from!

Though I never told anyone, while we were making this wordless trek I was often thinking to myself why my comrades had come with me this far; why they were risking so much for my child. Icarus was the last person I would have expected, and yet he had the simplest reason: this was an adventure. His life up to now, had been nothing but long years of rigorously enforced RF ordinances, time schedules and supply forms. For him breaking the law was not merely dangerous, but liberating.

Megilus probably had more complex reasons. He was PIMF man, and that meant fighting for the state and taking its orders; but - also because he was a PIMF man - he always fought for a cause, for "justice", and if that meant fighting *against* the state, so be it. At least, that's what I understood his reasoning to be. When we spotted the BPS building we were on a bridge two stories above it. Time was of the essence, so instead of going down several flights of stairs in the adjacent buildings, Megilus used a surplus PIMF rope ladder so we could clime down to the lower land bridge, then we could merely jump or clime over down to street level, for it wasn't too high.

Thankfully the BPS was almost deserted for the Foundation festivities, but we knew there was still a chance of running into a Bureausman or doctor; in that case we had decided we would have to resort to force to meet our objective. Our black hoods and robes, which had so perfectly blended into the city night, stood out sharply in the pristine ivory hospital; but we didn't have time to change clothes. The longer we wandered through the labyrinth and the greater chance we had of getting caught.

We had almost made an unspoken decision to turn back when Icarus made the final discovery. The maternity ward wasn't lighted like the rest of the hospital - it was a darkened room with row upon row of pregnant females, all fast asleep, drugged, and all the same time along. I had never actually seen a female on in the later stages of pregnancy before; the room reminded me of a field in Provincia, when crops all grown ripe, and were ready to be harvested. I found a manifest on the Administrators desk and

quickly searched it to find her. It was in Aurelian, but this posed no problem since I could read all four Politeian languages. When I saw her name, it did not surprise me at all; some how, I was glad it was her.

We sprinted through the vast bedroom as quick as we could without awakening any of the females, and finally arrived at our destination, Diana's bed. That sleeping, peaceful face I had known since childhood, whom I had gone through life with from First Level. She was my blood, my sister, the carrier of my child. I could not let her be harmed. She was clearly drugged, so it was relatively easy to get her onto the portable bed we had pilfered from the supply closet. We had finally freed the prisoner, now all we had to do was get her from the hospital to the Transportation headquarters, high jack a carriage, and abscond from the city undetected.

By the time we left the BPS the Festival had broken up and the first hints of gray could be seen in the eastern sky. We were lucky that the crowds had mostly broken up and returned to their RFs, though there would still be stragglers and a few other Citizens, who would normally be awake at this hour anyway. We rolled her past the Medical district without incident, passing some people coming in from the festival, but they didn't seem to notice us, and if they did, they didn't care.

Bronzenborg was different. The Citizens there had all retired, which meant there was no one to see us outside, but many who could hear us in their Dormatoriums. If caught, there was absolutely no – logical – reason we could give for hauling a pregnant woman through the streets in the middle of the night. Finally, the shape of the BUTT headquarters appeared before us, barely outlined against the black, cloudless sky.

Megalus had used a contact to secure access entry, and we soon entered the cavernous garage. The carriages were kept in several stories above us, while the horses were sleeping on the ground floor stable. Animals know when something is amiss and the most perilous moments in the entire operation occurred when we tried to get them out of the stable and hitch them to a carriage. By the time we got settled inside, with an strange sense of accomplishment and security, Diana was coming to, albeit quite drugged. We told her that everything was in order, and that this was just a normal part of the species propagating process. She didn't believe us. Even in her drugged state she knew something was wrong and became more and more agitated.

By the time the city gates opened before us and we had made our way into the green darkness of northern Provincia, she was beginning to have pangs in her belly. We had feared that this might happen; she was due any day now, and the stress of her liberation might cause her to go into labor. As carriage sped through the fields, Diana's pangs were becoming more and more frequent, almost continuous. Megalus and I tried to keep her calm while Icarus drove, racing against time to get to safety, before the baby came.

Finally, we arrived in Beth-Askelon.

CHAPTER FOUR

I just stood there, waiting. I stood on the cold beaches of the Eastern Sea, that morning looking blankly at the horizon, and waited for the sun to come up. Occasionally I'd glance back at the stable...no doctor could deliver the baby, of course, but there was a man in Ben-Ashkelon who delivered horses and other livestock. She was giving birth in his stable; I looked back at the horizon. There was a tiny sliver of sun poking out. Screams came from the stable; they had been for hours. Sun was making more progress, but still not risen. Shouts from the stable, "Breath, breath!" "*I am breathing!*," "Hold Still," "*Ahhhhhhh*" and the sun came up. "*Wahhhh, we, wahhhh,*" The door of the stable opened and closed behind me - Megalus.

"Well...what are you going to name him?"

"Matthew."

"Is that an iron name?"

"I don't know where I heard it before, but it's not Politeian. It's a new name, one that's never been heard in Politeia. I thought it was appropriate for someone who..." I glanced back at the stable. "Who is not like any of the others in Politeia."

"You mean his unauthorized birth?"

"I mean his unauthorized life." I looked Megalus in the eye. "We can't very well drop him off at the Educational Secretariat and say 'Here you go, bring him up. Assign him a level and a position in society.'"

"That's true," Megalus nodded, "Well, do you want to see him."

The babe was sitting on his mother's lap, suckling at her breast. Diana had taken part of her blue robe and made a little blanket for him, using the remainder as a kind of headress. They sat in front of a lantern which illuminated the whole stable.

"I'm so sorry, Diana"

"Why?"

"For bringing you to this place; for making you go into labor, for ..."

"They told me what was happening, that the BPS was going to destroy the child when he was born, so you had...took matters in your own hand... to be honest, though, it was hard to concentrate on anything except giving birth."

"They told you about the relationship between us, that we're co-progeny?" Her face contorted.

"Had figured it was something like that."

"I was thinking, Diana, about a name, we obviously can't go to the BPS for them to assign one..."

"Matthew:

"Did you hear me talking to Megalus?"

"No. Just when I first saw him, I knew his name was Matthew. Strange isn't it? I've never heard that name before." She looked down, smiling at little Matthew, who had just finished feeding. "Would you like to hold him?" I took him in my arms. Mathew looked at me with his tiny little eyes, and I became overwhelmed. No male progenitor, no father, in Politeian history had been able to look into the eyes of his progeny, his *son*, the way I did. Except one.

“This is a very special child, Klinias. Some how, I know that he is going to ...make things right for Politeia again. Some how or other, his birth, against all odds, it will redeem us.”

“What do you mean?”

“That he will, he will make what is dead living again. That, all the things we’ve done, Klinias, everything that Politeia has done wrong, he’s going to make it right. That, though we die, we will live eternally through him.”

“She’s not quite over the labor, Klinias,” the stable keeper came up behind me. “For awhile females need time to adjust, and they sometimes become incoherent like that.”

“Humans as well as livestock?”

“Both. She is tired, and needs to rest now.”

Despite the farmers assurances we were concerned about Diana. They say that females need special care right after giving birth, and that if they are not looked after they could expire. Finding medical expertise would undoubtedly enlarge the chances of our discovery, endangering everything we had worked for. (Though it might also mean better care for Diana). We had no choice. Icarus and I volunteered to return to the city to find help and see if our absence had raised any suspicions. Megalus stayed at Ben-Askelon, to be with Diana.

As we journeyed through the country side that clear winter day, I couldn’t help but be optimistic. Despite the fact that I could be indicted for treason at any moment, Despite the fact that Politeia was in a state of cold civil war, and despite the fact that I had no idea what the next step I had to take was, I was relieved. Matthew was born; everything else was superfluous. Icarus didn’t seem disturbed either. He was up front of the carriage, driving the horse, and humming some happy tune to himself. I had never seen him act like that.

Soon we arrived at the gates of the gray City, metropolitan Politeia, and summoned the guards for permission to enter. But there was no answer. We summoned again, but again there was no response. Eventually a small blue figure appeared at the top of the wall.

“Sorry, but the metropolitan Politeia is closed,” he yelled “for the duration of the crisis,”

“What crisis?”

“There has been a coup ...or a counter-coup ...or something. I’m not quite sure.”

“Who started it? I mean...who overthrew whom?”

“We’ll know when it’s over. Then who’s ever successful will determine who the traitors are.”

“Don’t you know anything?”

“I think the High Council accused Commandant Pericles of plotting against them because someone broke in to one of their offices last night. The PIMF they sent to arrest him thought it was a pretext to remove him from power, so they’ve all gathered around PIMF headquarters to protect him. The HC says that’s mutiny. They’ve called up the Urban Guard, because they’re loyal to them”

“So... whose side are you on?”

“Whoever wins.”

“Well, if you’re not loyal to anyone why don’t you just let us come in, we’re not loyal to any side either.”

“I can’t do that. What if your working for one of the factions, and the you’re on looses? Then I’ll be considered a traitor.”

“Yes, but...think of it like this: if we ‘re on the side that *wins*, you’ll still be regarded as a traitor for not helping us, but if we are on the side that wins, and you *do* help us...then you’ll be a patriot.” He paused for a moment.

“You know you have a point. I’ll let you in, if you promise me that you’re on the side that ends up becoming the patriots and not the traitors.”

Politeia was at a stand still. The perfect clockwork had stopped in place. No one populated the streets or bridges above us. Nobody had gathered at the vacant news platforms; the streets and bridges above them were silent, waiting. Presently we arrived at the beautiful old Residential Facility, were we finally found human habitation, huddled around in the Cafetarium. Unfortunately, one of them was expecting me.

“You!” the Urban Guardsman yelled, “I have been looking for you all morning. Klinias S-112263, identify yourself immediately!” I could feel the razors at my throat already.

“I am Klinias S-112263. Identify!” I proudly held my arm up to complete the stupid ritual one last time.

“Klinias, this is a time of national emergency. Why were you not in your assigned bed last night? And why have you failed to report for any of your duties today?”

“Well I had been celebrating the final night of the foundation festivals rather long, and I decided that instead of coming in late, I’d just...”

“It doesn’t matter... you’re coming with us now.” And so I was. No matter what excuse I gave, I knew what was going to happen. The HC loyalist led me out of the RF and into a specially prepared carriage. Whilst traveling I idly wondered if the PIMF would succeed in its coup, or counter-coup. Perhaps I’d be amnestied as someone oppressed by the old regime. Or if it failed, I’d be treated like a subversive, like I already was. Now I knew how that gatekeeper felt.

We abruptly stopped at Politeia Square and, while my captors were escorting me, I caught a glimpse of the “coup” - scores of soldiers were camped out in front of PIMF headquarters, guarding Pericles from the Urban Guard units lined up opposite them. There had been no bloodshed, thankfully, but soon one side would have move, and try to neutralize the other. It looked like a gigantic chess set. I knew that this surreal visage was probably my last glimpse of the outside world, and tried to take in as much as I could; this is likely why I failed to notice where my captors were leading me. Imagine my surprise when I found myself in the atrium of the Hall of the High Council.

“Why have you brought me here? I swear I’m not part of the co...”

“We know even less than you do. All I know is I was called up for UG duty in the middle of the night last night, and this morning I was sent to pick you up at RF4 and bring you here.”

“They didn’t give you any reason?”

“I heard someone say that one of the Councilors wanted to speak with you or question you about something...but I don’t think now would be a good time to disturb them”

He was right. If the High Council had summoned me early this morning they had evidently turned to other business by now, for all that emanated from behind the great oaken door was a continuous barrage of shouting and vituperation...

“Are you mad? How can *you*, of all people propose such a thing?”

“I am older, and I have seen many things come to pass in my lifetime, much of it before you, my Fellow-Counselors, were even born. Trust me when I tell you that what I am purposing is for the greatest good of the community. We shall have to rebuild from scratch. Politeia, as it now exists, is too deeply flawed; we are on the verge of civil war because of our over reliance on a tired, antiquated system, which has long since ceased to fulfill the needs of the people...”

“We are on the verge of civil war, Archonos, because some people have gotten selfish, wrong ideas in their head and are trying to disrupt the happiness and well being of our people.”

“I say now that you have all, *we* have all, failed in our mission. The very fact that we have had now, two separate rebellions speaks volumes. We need a re-evaluation of the Doctrine, and the Book of Nomoi. I am not advocating the overthrow of the High Council or the imposition of a military dictatorship, but Politeia... now that it has become a travesty of its founding ideals, it must be...*we must* start over again.”

“It is not a travesty of its ideals, Archonos, it is the *summation* of its ideals. And how do you plan to do this, if the HC forbids it and you don’t want a coup? We respect your long years of service to the people of Politeia, but its really time you had left governing to those with a more realistic view of events.” A long silence followed, and I could vaguely hear the shuffling of robes and the push of a chair.

“Now, we turn to our immediate problem, the mutiny of the PIMF-men...”

“Klinias S-112263?” A superior UB-man had entered while we were listening. “You were summoned by Archonos, for a private audience. I believe now would be an appropriate time to go see him in his quarters on the highest floor.” The other UB-man and I started towards the stairwell. “Tiberius. I’m afraid that he requested that Klinias arrive unattended.”

So I made my way up the stair well again, alone. For some reason the council had opened up an elaborate illumination system and let reflected sun light flood through the once darkened shafts. This allowed me to finally examine the strange designs and murals the adorned the Hall. And I didn’t like what I saw. Wars, executions, punishments designed to guide people back to the right path, it was really quite macabre. When I reached the highest level the door to Archonos’ door had been left open, carelessly, and the interior of the apartment visible. Things were scattered all over the floor, books were left half open and a little plate rested on his table with barely eaten food. The blue, turquoise aura I had always associated with the place was absent. But Archonos himself was still sitting at his stole, staring out at the Eastern Sea, just as he always was.

“Chairmen Archonos, sir...”

“They have no idea what its like to be me. These people ...they, always ask, always ask for things from me, from the Council, but they don’t know what its like. They

don't know what it is to carry the responsibility of the world on your shoulders. Have you ever noticed that?" I nodded my head, despite my bewilderment. "You give simple, easy commandments... just so the world will work, just so things can go along smoothly. But no, they always have to have more and more, they have to break even the simplest of rules, and then they get defensive when they're punished. They blame *me!* Me! After all I've sacrificed...have given up for..." He realized he was talking, to himself and sighed. "I'm sorry Klinias. You, you've always proven yourself a just man. Self sacrificing, like me. Someone who puts the good of Politeia before your own, one of the few." I tried to contain my embarrassment.

"Well, sir, that is certainly an honor coming from you, but..."

"Listen closely to what I have to say: Politeia is going to die. Not simply a coup or some political revolution -- I mean this city has spent its last chance. It is headed for its downfall. I have seen it."

"What...exactly do you mean? It's all going to be destroyed, somehow?"

"It will be drowned; drowned in a flood of water, fire, and blood. Klinias you, and all the others like you, must escape. You must leave this damned city before its too late; not just the city, Klinias, but the entire country, you must go beyond the Gates to the Western Forest. Perhaps even beyond that. Gather as many people as you can, for... though Politeia may die, through this exodus, through you and your children, Politeia may have eternal life. Now..." he looked me in the face. "Is there anything you would like to say?" It had all become too much. The pregnancy, the kidnapping, the coup, in such a short time. I could only say what I had to say.

"Sir, last night me and a few friends of mine kidnapped a pregnant woman who was carrying my child, and who is also my sister. We went and birthed the child in Provincia so the BPS wouldn't kill him. We've named him Mathew." There was a short pause. "Should I bring him with us?"

"That you must."

As the carriage navigated the deserted streets of metropolitan Politia, I meditated on my current situation: the PIMF might oust the High Council at any moment; I had a child and a recovering mother in Provincia (high treason); and Archonos, the former head of state, had just commissioned me to get as many people out of Politeia as possible (another high treason) before the only world I had ever known is completely destroyed. As it was, the world had been suddenly, and irrevocably, changed beyond recognition in a very short period of time. Only a few months ago, I couldn't have imagined being in this predicament; I couldn't have imagined the truths I was now forced to acknowledge. If only I could return to that time, before I knew I was living inside a lie. Inside a lie? The thought startled me. *Was* I inside a lie? A lie is when someone says something he knows to be false, in order to trick others into doing something for him. But the people running Politeia, they did not believe, and certainly did not know, that what they were saying was false. If any thing their devotion to its truth was frightening. No...no, I was not inside a lie at all. I was inside a dream... an illusion! The people who run this world believe in this dream so much that they are willing to do anything to make it a reality, even things that, in the short term, might be contrary to their ideals. I did not know if this was reassuring or unsettling.

CHAPTER 5

“Cassandra, I need to speak with you”

“Oh, I would like to Klinias, but I need to get back to my class; it keeps the children calm if we keep to the schedule going during times...”

“Listen, I know you have things to do, but right now, I need you to listen to me”

“Well...”

“Cassandra – there’s a newborn infant that needs your help right now,” Her eyes widened. “It was birthed last night in Provincia. He is alright, but we’re not so sure about the mother. We need someone with your expertise out there.”

“Why would...I mean, why was the child birth in Provincia? Future citizens are birthed in the Medical District. That’s why the BPS takes care of ...” I put my arms on her shoulders and looked into her eyes.

“Cassandra, the BPS had nothing to do with birthing this baby.” A queer look came over her face for a moment until the import of the words fully sunk in.

“Klinias! You birthed a child with out the BPS! Do you have any idea what you have done!? You’re not even trained for....,” And she began marching off.

“Where are you going?”

“To the RFA, I going to report this”

“The RFA helped me” She stopped and turned towards me, her forehead creased. “Listen, they were going to kill the child after its birth, we had to save it...”

“If they were going to kill it, Klinias, I’m sure they had a good reason. They are the gods, they are the doctors, they are the ones who make these decisions, not us. Who are we to disobey the commands of a legitimate authority, no matter what we may think of the commands?” She began marching off to my doom again.

“Look, I know we are supposed to put the needs of the community before self interest and all that but...it’s, it’s my progeny, Cassandra.” She stopped. “And the female progenitor...its Diana.” Slowly she turned her face towards me, bearing an expression of sympathy mixed with distrust.

Our journey to Ben-Ashkelon was silent. I never spoke about our purpose, for fear of reminding her of the gravity of her disloyalty. She already knew that, of course, but still...I needed her now, more than ever. I couldn’t risk her leaving me. So I said nothing. Storm clouds were gathering over Politeia, both literally and figuratively. I had informed Megalus about what Archonos had commanded me to do. It was he who would make the preparations for the exodus. There was no lack of people who wanted to be far from the city walls when the bloodletting started and getting them out was surprising easy; neither the High Council nor the PIMF wanted civilians in their way. The HC still had control of the North and Central portals; but the PIMF had control of the Southern one. Refugees were crowded at each, and when the time came the city would bleed out its people onto the Provincial highways; and the caravans were to rendezvous at the outer gates near Ben-Nazariah. I hope they all made it there in time. Icarus, Cassandra and I were already far beyond the city well before then.

By the time we had arrived in Ben-Ashkelon, it was already dusk. Diana was confined to a makeshift bed made from hay. What was left of her blue robes served as her only blanket. Yet, she was serene; when she saw us enter the barn, her face lit up softly; when she spoke, she spoke with a calm, peaceful, demeanor. It was a calmness that seemed oddly out of place among everything going on around us. Cassandra looked took care of some of her wounds, and made some formula for the baby, but we knew how it would end. We could only be making her last hours comfortable. Soon, the last moments drew near, and she spoke:

“I...I think I am the most lucky of women...”

“You’re dying, and the child you died to give life to will likely grow up in a world of chaos” Cassandra retorted.

“Death, is just a change, I see that now. We all die, and I’m going to die giving birth to someone...that will keep Politia from dying?”

“Diana,” I interjected. “You realize...that you won’t be able to raise this child. You’re his mother, but...”

“I am not his mother. His mother, really, is fate... Fate that made that made that Bureausmen mistake you for the person who was supposed to impregnate me. Fate that brought Joshua there, at that time and place. Fate...that allowed me to get out of Politia, so he could be born.” She smiled. “But Matthew does need someone to care for him... until the time is ready. Cassandra, hold out your hand.” She stretched out her arm across the bed.

“And Klinias” I put my hand in Cassandras. Diana held them both together.

“Klinias, Cassandra...my dearest friends, I charge you...take care of little Matthew as long as you can. He needs you. When you can no longer do this –you will know – let him go ... he will be safe... and Cassandra,” with precious little strength she turned to her, “take care of my brother, he needs you more than you will ever know. Do this in...remembrance...of...me” and she past.

I stepped out side of the barn for a moment and began pacing. I was at a loss. Where...what, was I supposed to do? For decades I had dedicated my self to the good of Politeia. And now there was no Politeia. Not only was everything I ever worked for gone; now it was wrong. Past, present, future...everything that I, that Diana, and Megilus and Cassandra, had was taken away. I couldn’t just think about my self and reflect what was happening. More important things were happening. We need to get the last refugees out of the city. People were still depending on me and I needed to put that first. But we needed to take care of Diana. Obviously we couldn’t cremate her. Sending her back to Politeia was out of the question, and I knew no one in Ben-Ashkelon had the expertise. We didn’t have the time to build any sort of sarcophagus. Burying her was the only thing I could think of. Yesterday had seen Politeia first unauthorized birth; that night would see its first unauthorized funeral.

While Diana was peacefully laid to rest in Provincia, Politia was expiring. The High Council eventually did try to seize Pericles in the headquarters. The troops loyal to Pericles resisted them and there was bloodshed among the Politicians between Urban Guard and PIMF, between silvers and silvers, golds and golds. This came just as a large storm reached the Politian shores, but hate outwore fear and even the will to survive. The Dormatiriums and even the cafeterias were scenes of hand to hand fighting, even among those who were not PIMF or UG, but simply of people who did not believe as their neighbor's did.

The waters rose silently from the harbor while the denizens foolishly murdered one another. Those who had no side, or those who merely valued their lives above their vengeance, crowded the three roads in large caravans. Never had there been such a pilgrimage out of the gray city. Megalus and Icarus helped to organize them. As soon as I had buried Diana, I directed the exodus as best I could, leading the refugees through the, to me, familiar paths of Provincia until we had congregated most of them to the gates bordering the Western forest. We had some trouble with the local PIMF, many of whom, like the gate keeper in Politia, were confused about the situation in the city, and who was in command of them. The great numbers of refugees, however, and the, even from this distance, visible death agony of the city, convinced them that there was a better chance for their lives and our own, to go out into the dark unknown than to risk certain death here.

I was not in Politia when the final nail fell, but I listened closely to the stories of the refugees. Not only water and blood, but also fire doomed Politeia. It may have been started by one of their other factions, but it spread deletion indiscriminately, burning the library, the archives, as well as the venerable ISD cathedral. I could see it in my mind's eye: the chapel with the stained glass windows bathed in flame. The place where I had seen that weird ceremony, and those ominous words slowly burning safely into oblivion. The Garden of the Fallen – the one future of all of us, and abode of all who had past – green life turning to black embers at last. Even that statue of Legaius Donatious, who had gazed upon Politeia since time immemorial, I'm sure could not long survive its wrath.

I thought of the other places too, each populated by some scene from my own life: Bronzenborg, deserted but those fighting in futile combat, and those who would never fight again. So many tools and inventions would never be handle by skilled hands. The RF4, my home and community, my bed, slowly filling with the deleterious water. From our view point up in the mountains we could see the final end: Doctrinal Tower – the unmovable reminder of our loyalties and ideals – collapsed and fell into the chaos that once was our city. One of the refugees who was with me when we saw this cheered momentarily “Good riddance for all that” I could only scold him quietly.

The waters put out the fires, but the ruins only sank further under them. Indeed, the Flood swept the whole country up to the frontiers of the Mountains. And so Politica was no more. It had drowned in a sea of water, fire and blood.

POSTLOUGUOM

And so, it has been for many months. A total of about 3,000 escaped and we have wondered looking for signs of other human habitation for months. Our knowledge of extra-Politeian geography is so limited; we do not even know if we are on an island or a continent, or if there *is* any human habitation on whatever land mass we might be on. We have journeyed south, since we knew that the north terminated on a cape, and have made do with what supplies could be taken with us in our last hours in Politiea.

But our situation does not look good. We had all been prepared, trained, if you will, for our specializations, to work our part in what we had thought was an eternal machine. Any attempt at settling, farming, or otherwise living in this unfamiliar environment, with only randomly saved tools has proved a dismal failure. We are dying off more each week. Of the original 3,000 perhaps 30 are left.

Thus, realizing that I am upon my own and my societies' ultimate demise I have written this narrative to inform any who may find it of who we were and what we did. The child who is within this ark with this manuscript is named Mathew and he is the last survivor of a once great civilization. A civilization that, like all others, had many faults, but was not without its glories. I am sending this basket down a river which leads beyond a mountain in the east. He has a chance of survival in the unknown, whereas his future with us is only certain death. We will send him down the river this very night, as soon as I finish these words, then I will have fulfilled my final duty.